

This Week in Congress

June 7, 2010

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." This week's headlines are:

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Meeting with Military & Veterans Advisory Committee at Forbes Field

On Tuesday, I met with my Military & Veterans Advisory Committee at Forbes Field in Topeka. The purpose of this Advisory Committee is to keep me informed on the important issues facing our military and veterans in Kansas and to ensure they have a strong voice in Washington.

The meeting began with an informative briefing by Kansas Adjutant General Tod Bunting on the activities and missions of the Kansas National Guard. General Bunting highlighted upcoming Kansas Guard deployments to Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and Iraq, as well as the Guard's refueling, intelligence, and first responder training work in Kansas. The Advisory Committee also discussed a number of other issues, including the importance of Junior ROTC programs, meeting the mental health needs of combat veterans, and the 2011 Defense Authorization Bill recently passed by the House.

Thanks to all the members of the Committee for their commitment: Roger Aeschliman, Robert Arter, Jim AuBuchon, Rhonda Edens, Mark Edwards, Tom Fryer, Gene Heiman, Richard Keller, Orris Kelly, Gary LaGrange, Richard Myers, Ryan Newell, George Powers, Robert Ulin, David Warnken and Dick Young. Thanks also to Gen. Bunting and the 190th Air Refueling Wing Commander Col. Keith Lang for hosting us, Maj. Chris Hill and Col. Hans Neidhardt for helping set up this meeting, as well as John Armbrust of the Governor's Military Council for attending.

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Veterans Deserve a Congress Worthy of Their Sacrifice

America has come a long way in our treatment of the warriors who protect our freedoms. During the Vietnam War, service members returning from the front lines were met with hostility; today, they are welcomed home with open arms.

Tragically, Washington D.C. is far behind the times. More than a million service members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have become eligible for Veteran's Administration (VA) health care. The influx of veterans into the system will continue to grow in the coming years. Congress must immediately get its fiscal house in order so that we have the resources to address the challenges the VA system faces. These brave men and women deserve a government worthy of their sacrifice. [Click here](#) to read my editorial on this topic published in Politico.

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Israel Has Right to Defend Itself

This week, Israel Defense Forces stopped foreign ships from breaking a naval blockade of Gaza. While the ships carried some humanitarian supplies, the primary aim was to provoke Israel—not deliver aid. Some passengers had links to terrorist groups and attacked Israeli forces as they boarded a ship. Nine passengers were killed and seven Israeli soldiers were injured. The loss of life and violence is regrettable, especially since this incident could have been avoided. Israel offered the ships the opportunity to dock in Israel and have the aid delivered to Gaza. In fact, after Israel stopped the ships, legitimate aid was allowed in.

Israel's blockade is a legal effort designed to prevent weapons from being smuggled into Gaza. Gaza is controlled by Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist group, whose charter calls for the destruction of Israel. Since 2005, Hamas terrorists have fired more than 7,000 rockets and mortar shells into Israel. Israel has a right to defend itself, including by enforcing the blockade to prevent the smuggling of weapons that can be used by Hamas to kill Israeli civilians. Israel is our ally and shares our fight against terrorism. The United States must stand with Israel during this time.

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Visiting with Patients at Fredonia Regional Hospital

Fredonia Regional Hospital (FRH), located in Wilson County, provides comprehensive healthcare services to residents in communities surrounding Fredonia. In 2008, FRH completed

a multi-phase project that included a new 24,800 square foot hospital expansion. On Thursday, I enjoyed touring FRH and viewing the new facility. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with patients and staff members about the importance of community hospitals, especially in rural Kansas. I also thanked the staff for their dedication to caring for local residents. Thanks to Administrator Terry Deschaine and staff members of FRH for arranging my visit. Thanks also to FRH Board Chairman Ralph Holland and to Chief Nursing Officer Pam Harmon for their hospitality during my visit.

The “Big First” Congressional District has 76 of our state’s 126 community hospitals—the most hospitals of any congressional district in the nation. I have visited each of the hospitals in the “Big First” and I continue to visit hospitals across Kansas to learn more about the unique health care challenges our communities face.

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Speaking at Overland Park South Rotary Club Meeting

On Wednesday, I attended the Overland Park South Rotary Club meeting to talk with community leaders about the need for fiscal restraint and responsibility. Since 2007, the federal deficit has increased from about \$160 billion to more than \$1.4 trillion last year. In May, our national debt reached an all-time high of \$13 trillion. This reckless spending must be stopped for the sake of our children and grandchildren, who will have to pay these debts. As a fellow

Rotarian, I always enjoy meeting with other Rotarians. Thanks to Cindy Green, current club President, and Alan Stetson, President-elect, for inviting me to speak.

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Thanking Lions Club Members for Serving Kansas Communities

On Friday, I joined members of Kansas Lions Clubs for their 89th Annual Convention in Olathe. Since 1919, Lions Clubs have offered Kansans the opportunity to serve and enhance their communities. During the conference, several members spoke about service projects they have led across our state. I was impressed by the members' commitment and thanked them for the positive impact they are making in Kansans' lives. I commend the Lions Club members for their dedication to a cause greater than themselves – to serve one another. Thanks to State Secretary Linda McCormick for the kind invitation to attend and thanks to Les Herman for arranging the details of my visit.

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Visiting the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

On Wednesday, I joined members of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce during their luncheon meeting. It was good to visit with folks and get an update on the many good things going on in Overland Park, including last month's announcement that the city was included in the 13th annual list of "America's Top 100 Places to Live for 2010." The designation was made by RelocateAmerica.com, a website providing individuals and businesses access to resources for their upcoming move. Congratulations to the Chamber for the role they played in this honor. Thanks to the Kansas City Regional Association of REALTORS for having me as their guest.

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In the Office

David Dial and Troy Bechtel of Merriam were in with United Medical Design Builders to discuss service-disabled veteran businesses. Greg Krissek of Colwich was in with ICM and members of the National Sorghum Producers Association to discuss renewable fuel standard regulations being developed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

High School students from Concordia were in this week to share their thoughts on a variety of policy issues. Members in with the group included: Taylor Chrisco, Nathan Koerber, Drake Champlin, Mallory Backstrom, Justin Huber, Leah Haden, Jordan Mastin, Tavia Fazel, Morgan Berk, Blaine Tholstrup, Garrett Coash, Angela Dvorak, James Remley, Ashley Thoman, Haley Bowers, Alec Champlin, Elisa Gerard and Elaine Bowers.

Several Kansans were in this week for a tour of the U.S. Capitol building, including Tom and Virginia Lee of Medicine Lodge; Greg, Amy and Raylynn Wartman of Ulysses; Matt, Rachel, Nathaniel and Madeline Lee of Satanta; Barb, Nelson and Carolyn Gutsch, and Nyla Romeiser of Salina; Cindy, Megan and Mindy Wood, and Yasnaya Susoeff of HaviLand; Don and Annette Owens of Wichita; Camron Owens of Emporia; Edwin, Kim, Brian and Elizabeth Jakubowski of Ellis; Dan and Georgia Link of Hutchinson; Katelyn Ochs of Arlington; and Dwight, Marilyn and Grant Flaming of Hillsboro.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#). You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,